

# **Computer Confidence Training for Grape Growers**

## **Project Leader(s):**

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## **Cooperators:**

NY Wine & Grape Foundation

Jamestown Community College

Finger Lakes Community College

Canandaigua Wine Company

National Grape Cooperative

Viticulture 2000 and 2003 Committee members

## **Funding:**

NY Wine & Grape Foundation

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**Project location(s):** This demonstration and education project was located in the Lake Erie and Finger Lakes grape-growing regions of New York State.

## **Abstract:**

Computer Confidence Training for grape growers keeps agriculture competitive. We partnered with six collaborators to provide hands-on "computer confidence" training to grape growers. Classes were small with 6 to 12 growers attending each session. We provided 200 total hours of training to 358 grape growers (68% were beginners) in the Lake Erie and Finger Lakes regions, relating most of the content to growers' needs. After completing the course, 98% felt the training met their objectives, and 86% either strongly agreed (37%) or agreed (49%) that 'I feel more prepared to meet the new computer standards being set by the processors.'

## **Background and justification:**

Computer Confidence Training for grape growers keeps agriculture competitive. Experienced grape growers know how to manage their vineyards, but are often less computer literate than those just entering the business. Yet successful operations rely increasingly on electronic communication at every level of pest management.

Grape extension programs provide up-to-the minute IPM pest forecasts and other timely information via electronic newsletters. Food processors are requiring more accountability from growers about the sprays they use (which is why the NYS IPM Program offers growers its innovative TracGrape<sup>®</sup> software, permitting one-stroke record-keeping on each processors' forms). Indeed, in this increasingly global industry, access to information can be the key to remaining profitable. Growers without the skills to use email and the web are at a distinct disadvantage.

### Objectives:

1. Provide basic computer training to grape growers.
2. Assist grape growers in developing more advanced computer skills.

### Procedures:

Instructors from Jamestown Community College and Finger Lakes Community College conducted 200 hours of classroom and hands-on computer training for 358 grape growers in the Lake Erie and Finger Lakes regions. They taught classes in Windows Foundation, File Management, E-Mail and related topics (calendars, to-do lists, etc.), World Wide Web/Internet Skills, spreadsheets, word processing, record keeping and bookkeeping. Classes were designed to train as many growers as possible while providing the amount of individual attention needed for beginning computer users. Class size was small, with 6 to 12 growers at a time. The information presented had a grape-related theme when possible.

### Results and discussion:

Participants enjoyed taking classes with their peers. Table 1 shows the number of hours and participants for each course taught.

**Table 1.** Hours of Computer Training Course Type and Number of Participants.

<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Number of Hours</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
Basic/Core	72	223
MS Word	36	38
MS Excel	56	67
QuickBooks	15	11
Windows (Advanced)	12	9
File Management (Advanced)	9	10
<b>Total:</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>358</b>

Evaluations completed by course participants at the end of each course were another indicator of the project's success. One of the major goals of this project was to provide basic computer training to grape growers. We hit this target audience as a majority of course participants rated themselves as beginner (68%) or intermediate (28%) computer users. Ninety-eight percent of participants felt the training met the course objectives while 86% either strongly agreed (37%) or agreed (49%) with the statement 'I feel more prepared to meet the new computer standards being set by the processors. Only one percent of total participants felt that they were not better prepared after taking the course.

Many who participated in the project have expressed an interest in being able to take more advanced computer training. While we are not in the position to continue to provide free training at the level of this project, the committee has been holding conversations about how we can continue similarly styled training at a minimal cost to growers. We are currently developing a survey to determine the need for future computer training and the types of classes desired.

- 🕒 98% of participants feel they are more prepared to meet the new computer standards being set by grape processors in New York State.
- 🕒 358 grape growers who considered themselves to be at the skill level of beginning or intermediate in computer use found training in small groups with their peers on subject matter related to grapes allowed them to begin developing the skills needed to manage a vineyard in today's global market.